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ABSTRACT

This document presents one in a series of twenty-three case studies derived from in-depth interviews using a sampling of former participants in the Mountain-Plains program, a residential, family-based education program developed to improve the economic potential and lifestyle of selected student families in a six-state area. Each case study contains the following information about a specific student family: biographical data; participation in the educational and community programs; home, income, placement, and employment data; stated problems and/or satisfactions; summaries of the participants' personal and social development; individual ratings of the program; scripts of personal interviews; interviewer comments; and individual test scores and self-assessments. This document presents specific findings on Ray and Nancy Barton, who entered the program with two children and a long history of consistent unemployment. The follow-up study reports that both individuals completed the program and found employment although they have only been employed six of the twelve months since leaving Mountain-Plains due to the general economy of the area of their current residence. (Names in these studies have been changed.) Two other documents are included in the series: a report which examines work and income variables for the group (ED 110 610) and a report which summarizes group findings on personal and social development (CE 014 681). Specific documentation for the instruments utilized in the study are included in both of these related documents. (BM)

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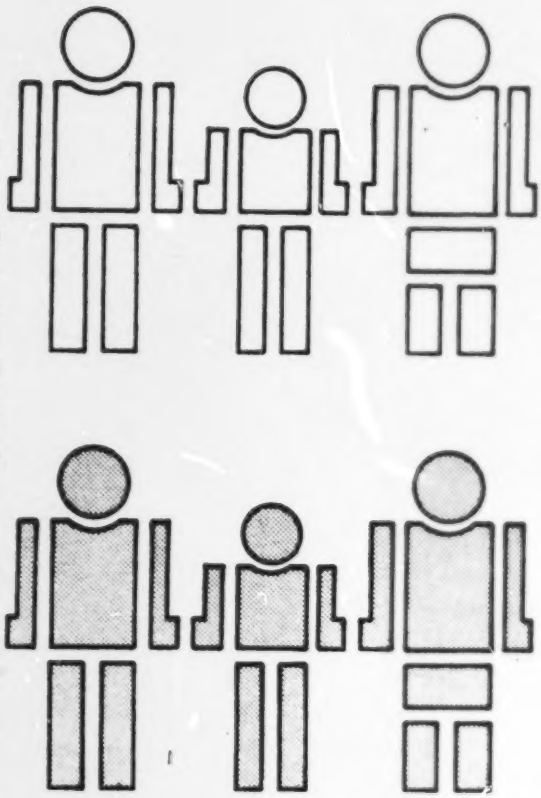

CASE STUDY REPORT # 5

Ray & Nancy Barton

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
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MOUNTAIN PLAINS EDUCATION ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM INC.

CASE STUDY REPORT

RAY AND NANCY BARTON

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May, 1975

A Product of Research Services Division
David A. Coyle, Director

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PREFACE

Reports in this series are derived from in depth interviews using a stratified random sample of former Mountain-Plains students. Interviews were conducted from November, 1974 through January, 1975 by Mountain-Plains professional research staff. Case Study Report 1 examines Work and Income variables for the group. Case Study Reports 2 through 24 include specific findings on each family included in the sampling. Case Study Report 25 summarizes group findings on personal and social development. A summary of the research design for the Case Study Reports is documented in: Coyle, David A.; Conrad, Rowan W.; and Myers, Douglas D. In Depth Case Study of Exited Families: A Summary of the Research Design for Phase 1 Preliminary Effects Study. Glasgow, Montana: Mountain-Plains Press, 1974. Specific documentation for the instruments utilized in the study are included in either Case Study Report 1 or Case Study Report 25. All names in these studies have been changed.

Michael C. Fenenbock
Series Editor

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CASE STUDY

RAY AND NANCY BARTON

BACKGROUND

Ray and Nancy Barton entered Mountain-Plains in early March of 1973. At the time Ray had been unemployed for six months, while Nancy had not worked outside the home during the past twelve months. Family income for the past year was reported at $3,500, and although the intake file does not indicate it, Barton's reported during follow-up interviews that, prior to attending Mountain-Plains, they were receiving welfare benefits.[1] Ray, Nancy and their two sons, Dwane, 2, and John, 1, were living in a rented three room trailer house in Missoula, Montana, which their entry narrative describes as "badly in need of repair." The trailer belonged to relatives and the Bartons paid only $30 per month rent. Up to six months prior to program entry, Ray had a history of consistent employment--mostly in sawmills and housing construction. Ray says his sudden unemployment at that time was due to "lack of work" around Missoula when "hard times" hit the lumber business. Both Ray and Nancy are high school graduates, however, both recorded low test scores in math and communication skills at entry.[2] While Ray is verbally articulate, Nancy has trouble expressing herself. Both Ray and Nancy are over weight, Ray grossly so.

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[1] The Barton's were not specific as to the type and amounts.

[2] WRAT scores for Ray: English 5.7 and Math 6.5. For Nancy: English 12.9 and Math 4.2.

PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

At the time of entry, staff reports on the Barton's show Nancy's math level below the intended selection criteria (5th grade level), and due to classroom problems, Nancy did not complete any portion of the curriculum. At Mountain-Plains, Ray was a very slow learner particularly from written materials. However, his instructors reported that if they spent time with Ray on the machinery, he learned (albeit slowly) and that once he learned something, he never forgot it.

PLACEMENT

Ray exited Mountain-Plains at the end of October, 1973 having completed the Automotive Tune-up and Automotive Air Conditioning occupational area. He was employed by Russell Chevrolet in Casper, Wyoming as a General Mechanic.[3] The State Office reported his salary as $4.25 per hour. However, Ray reports that he was not paid hourly, but rather on flat rate and that his average income was about $300 to $350 per month. After four months Ray thought he would be laid off due to lack of work, and resigned to pursue a more lucrative employment prospect that did not materialize. Following that, Ray worked odd jobs for two months, before securing a job with Johnson's Chevrolet as a general mechanic in Bonners Ferry, Idaho. Two month's later, Ray quit, citing employer conflicts and low pay as the reason. For the past six months, Ray has been unemployed, subsisting on odd jobs, occasional work as a substitute filling station attendant, and county general assistance coupled with food stamps.

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[3] This is a higher level position than his validation.

Ray reports he has about given up looking for work--that the general economy of the area, tied as it is to lumber, just does not have jobs.

HOME AND INCOME

Currently Ray and Nancy Barton are in their early twenties, their sons are now ages 2 and 3, and Nancy is pregnant. They live in an 8'x45' trailer house in a small Idaho logging town. The yard surrounding the trailer is a miniature junk yard. A stove pipe sticks out through a cardboarded window as a wood burning stove has been set up in the living room because, the Bartons say, they will not be able to afford propane this winter. Wood, however, is abundant and free in this mountain forest area. Inside the trailer is shabby and small but clean and neat. A table, three unmatched kitchen chairs, a kitchen table, a battered sofa, and a dated television are the only furnishings.

Ray has not worked for several months. The Barton's income consists of food stamps and county general assistance which Ray works off at the county rock crusher. An old travel-all van is in good repair, as Ray is a mechanic, but the Barton's report the van is seldom used as money must go for things other than gasoline. The combination of the housing slump and the coming of winter have resulted in heavy unemployment in this lumber town, so the Bartons have plenty of company on the unemployment roles.

The Barton's social life centers on their church--one of the strict protestant sects. Church is their only touchpoint in the community which, like many small mountain towns, is fairly clannish. Ray has a reputation for being lazy,

though the manager of the local service station says this is derived as much from the town's clannishness and Ray's weight (about 300 lbs.) as from factual observation. "Mr. Barton probably isn't any lazier than most folks."

The Barton's children are both underweight. However, the one meal at which the children were observed was well balanced considering the family's circumstances--beef heart, potatoes, and carrots. Ray ignores the children except to yell and make threats when they misbehave. Nancy deals fairly well with the children in what seems to be more an instinctive than learned manner, although by textbook standards, she would have to rate as overindulgent.

Ray constantly refers to his religion. At Mountain-Plains he was reputed to call any institutional practice he did not like an infringement of his religious freedom (e.g., confrontation as regards his weight, the way he dealt with his family or denial of a special unearned leave request). Currently, he seems to use his religion more as a social contact point and excuse than as a vital part of his value system. When asked what steps he was going to take to improve his situation, he said he was going to trust in God.

In the family interviews, Ray constantly quieted his wife--sometimes covertly, and sometimes with an overt "shut-up" or "you talk too much." In the 1:1 interview with the wife (agreed to by Ray only because he was due at the rock crusher and did not want to jeopardize the $40 interview fee), Nancy reported that Ray did not live the religion, only talked it, confirming the suspicion that it was more an excuse than a means or end.

PROBLEMS AND SATISFACTIONS

Ray says he is neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with his current life, whereas Mrs. Barton reports being a little dissatisfied (although in conversation she appears very dissatisfied). The Barton's have been employed only 6 months of the year since leaving the program. Both rate as possessing more of a powerlessness feeling than (Neal and Seeman's) norm and score higher on anomie than (Srole's) norm--in fact, they have the maximum possible anomie score. The Bartons are thus seen as alienated from their social field, and as feeling powerless within it. As could be predicted, self concept scores are very low for both. Only on personal self do the scores approach the instrument norm, and on this scale they do not reach it. The total self concept score is 1½ standard deviations below the norm--even lower than normal for habitual job losers in a recent urban study. Future employment success is thus not predicted. Ray's Mountain-Plains exit report reads, "When the Bartons entered Mountain-Plains they had about as little going for them as any family we've ever had." It is hard to imagine that the Bartons ever had less going for them than they do now, but this seems to be the case. The Bartons have gone, apparently, from abjectly destitute all the way up to crushingly poor. (See Figures 3 & 4.)

The only thing that either of the Bartons could find to be satisfied with was the fact that they had a "place" and food. In response to questions about good and bad breaks, they refused to answer saying there was no such thing as breaks--that people make their own luck. Pursuing this, it turned out that what Ray meant was that God makes breaks for some in mysterious ways. In response to a question about what they wanted that they did not have, Nancy

replied she wanted a nicer home. Ray said he wanted to be under God's rule rather than man's, that man was ignorant, and should not rely upon himself but upon God.[4]

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

When the weather is nice the Bartons report, they go on family fishing and hunting outings. These were the same activities pursued at Mountain-Plains. The Bartons did not take part in any organized activity groups at Mountain-Plains and they currently report feeling no responsibility to their community. "It hasn't done anything for me," Ray said, "so why should I do anything for it." The Bartons do not vote but do attend church together regularly.

EMPLOYMENT

Ray's only recent work, apart from odd jobs, has been substituting in a local service station while an employee was on leave. The station manager says Ray was competent in the areas he knew "light duty work--like tune-up--such as one expects in a service station," --that he always gave Ray specific instructions for new tasks and that under these circumstances, Ray was a good worker. This indicates that given the right circumstances, Ray is employable. However, both Mountain-Plains reports and the station manager indicate that Ray lacks both the technical and personal skills to function broadly or independently.

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[4] Ray seldom gave specicic answers to personal/family/social questions, and became difficult when attempts were made to pursue more specific responses this pattern of avoidance was also reported by staff who worked with Ray during his stay at Mountain-Plains.

The station manager seemed to feel that he knew Ray well, so, in spite of the brief period of employment, an MSS was completed. Ray rated at the 50th percentile versus all workers on the "work" area. His lowest rating was on dependability (25th percentile). This rating stems from the fact that the manager feels that Ray does not have the ability to take appropriate initiative and the supervisor, therefore must prescribe all work. He reported that Ray always came to work when scheduled and on time. The manager said that if he had a full-time job, he would hire Ray for it but as the area is depressed there is little likelihood of anyone quitting, or of the owner hiring additional help.

Nancy does not work outside the home. Her only work experience was a stint as a cleaning woman for a few months. She would like to work, thinks it would be fun, but her husband does not wish her to, and she does not possess the personal skill, foundation education skill, or the job training to execute other than simple tasks.

Ray worked in Wyoming for four months as a mechanic on flat rate following the program. He reports that he could not make enough money to support his family on flat rate (income of $300--$350 per month)--because the agency garage where he worked did not have enough work within his capabilities (tune-up and refrigeration). Ray blames Mountain-Plains for his failure, saying they should have found him a job where he was paid hourly and could survive until he could broaden his skills or should have provided him with a broader education so he would have been able to handle other kinds of mechani-

cal jobs.[5] Ray has moved twice pursuing work--his first lead was faulty and the second job lasted for only six weeks and was terminated by mutual agreement of employee and employer who had thoroughly learned to disrespect each other. (In fairness to Ray, the latter employer has a reputation in the community for being "impossible to work for." Indeed, many in the community will not work for him. His mechanical help is hired outside, moved into the community, and seldom remains long in his employ.)

Ray's Employability Report in the Mountain-Plains files relates that Ray is only conditionally employable in that he is slow to learn and has limited skills. However, the report adds, "given light duty mechanic work, mostly tune-up and patient simple instructions for new tasks, Mr. Barton can be successful." The first employment found for Ray was contrary to conditions known to be necessary for his employment success. And, to the extent that Mountain-Plains has an obligation to secure jobs the student is able to accomplish (rather than just "some" job), Mountain-Plains has failed in their obligation to Ray.

RATING THE MOUNTAIN-PLAINS PROGRAM

Ray feels that Mountain-Plains was a positive influence in his life, while Nancy thought it very negative. The only aspects of Mountain-Plains that Nancy rated as of at least some value were Health, Home Management, Career Guidance, Recreation, and Counseling. Ray rated all aspects of Mountain-Plains

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[5] Counselors and Instructors report that Ray was advised of this problem while at Mountain Plains but chose to ignore it.

in which he participated (except Home Management) as of at least some value. Ray reported that math and Consumer Education were of most value to him, and is proud of the fact that though he has had consistent employment problems he has contracted no new debts. Nancy thought Career Guidance and Health were the most useful. Ray thought Community Development was the least useful part of the Program. Nancy commented she would not rate any of the current program offerings as "least useful," but that the problem solving class she took was the least useful thing for her. Ray and Nancy are divided on whether, knowing what they now know, they would have attended Mountain-Plains. Ray says definitely yes, and Nancy says definitely not. (See Figure 5 & Table 2.)

Nancy did not take a job preparation area due to a combination of small children in the home and her classroom problems. Ray felt that the job skills learned in automotives were fine but too limited. Ray reports that in this part of the country you can't specialize- you have to be a general mechanic. "Maybe in Los Angeles you can make it on tune-up and refrigeration, but not around here." He suggests Mountain-Plains make people aware of this factor and not let them exit with just one or two specialties. As for progress and improvements, Ray suggests more equipment, more adequate tool boxes, and making certain those preparing in a specialty such as air conditioning have proper tools available. Additionally, Ray felt that those entering automotives without a previous background in the area should start with work on small engines before continuing on to automobiles.

Ray felt that both his English and Math skills have been adequate except, he

says, he still cannot spell very well (but he has not needed to either). Ray says he would not change preparation areas, but if possible he would have tried to do appliance repair at the same time as automotives.

Ray felt that Career Guidance did not help him and that Counseling helped only in the area of perseverance--encouraging him to stick with things through hard times. (As mentioned, Ray experienced difficulty with "paper" curriculum.) Ray's suggestion for Career Guidance included the use of simple vocabulary and simple explanations. He felt that much of what was done was over his head. Additionally, Ray suggested that Mountain-Plains hire only single counselors "so they won't confuse their own marriage problems with mine." He stated that the counselors in general needed more experience and/or more training. Nancy felt that Career Guidance helped her with self confidence in that she discovered jobs that she thought she could do. She said Counseling helped w th her appearance, self control, and courtesy toward others. Nancy could not specify how this was accomplished.

When asked what general suggestions the Bartons would make to Mountain-Plains, Ray said Mountain-Plains should expand the variety of training areas, simplify the curriculum, and keep the state staff up to date "so they don't tell people the wrong things." Nancy said she "don't know any suggestions."

As a result of the Mountain-Plains Program, both Ray and Nancy feel that they are more confident in dealing with health care problems. Medical visits were about as frequent as previous to Mountain-Plains with most of them centered on

Nancy's prenatal care and "nerves." The Bartons point out that their children have not been behaving, that they have been experiencing problems with them, and, while Ray said he understood them sometimes, Nancy commented she did not understand them at all. (as mentioned, the only behavior observed from Ray towards the boys was yelling and threatening.)

The Bartons say they are not able to make ends meet financially but neither are they going in debt. This apparent contradiction was explained by saying that if they had to pay rent they would be "sunk," but since Ray's father owns the trailer they do not pay rent when Ray is not working. Nancy says the family does not agree on how to spend money, but Ray contends that they do. By arguing the point, Ray was able to badger Nancy into a "sometimes we agree" response.

FEMALE INTERVIEW

During the interview, Nancy was very open. Without Ray's frequent "shut-up" and "you talk too much" to inhibit her, she was an ideal interviewee. Nancy says she used to be proud of her appearance, but no longer. (Her unhappiness in this area seemed to go beyond the usual pregnancy embarrassment body image problem, as Nancy is overweight apart from the pregnancy contribution.) She is confident in her ability to shop, sew, see to health and nutrition, and generally execute home care tasks. However, she does not like housework. This statement is confirmed by the JDI rating on housework (5th percentile versus employment norms.) Shopping, is reported as an unenjoyable experience. Her husband, Nancy says, controls the money, insists

on going along, and completely dominates the purchasing. "He gets the things he wants and doesn't pay no attention to me and the kids."[6]

Nancy reports she seldom has time for herself with two young sons and a demanding husband to care for. Ray, she says, helps her around the house, but she feels neither satisfied or appreciated. Her one friend is an elderly lady. Ray does not like her mother, gets abusive when she sees her, and Nancy feels isolated from her family. Nancy declared she dropped occupational preparation at Mountain-Plains because of "nerves." Mountain-Plains reports say she did not take an occupational preparation because she could not handle simple curriculum. (The conflict is apparent--the stress of attempting material beyond her capacity may have triggered an attack of "nerves.") Nancy is not certain if she had a chance to "redo," she would "do different." She would like to work, but is uncertain she can handle school. (Probably realistic, as school could be, and has been, very difficult for Nancy.)

Nancy says she is not particularly happy as a woman but is not sure she would like to be a man either although she feels Ray has it easier, "I wait on him all the time." Nancy likes herself, and says that if she were someone else, she would like to have herself for a friend because, "I'm nice and would help a person whenever I could."

Nancy says, "Ray never talks to me or the kids." (Except to give orders).

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6 Observation--Ray had accummulated an entire junk yard of "toys" for his automotive/mechanical hobbies but the children did not appear to have toys.

Ray does not talk about his job or job problems, but Nancy does know what he does on his job, "he fixes cars." Nancy says they make major decisions together but that Ray makes many decisions on his own. She reports that she makes no decisions alone because, "He won't let me." Lack of communication extends to the children with Nancy reporting they never talk about problems with, or dreams for, the children. Ray, she says, does most of the disciplining of the children. (The interviewer observed this to be the case.) Nancy sees no change in Ray since Mountain-Plains, and reports that he has always been the same (overbearing and noncommunicative). Nancy reports her only change is she frequents church more.

As previously, Nancy was very negative about Mountain-Plains when the interviewer asked what could have been done to make it better. She replied she needed more time to accomplish things and more personal staff attention than was available. She also said she would like to have had more time in Career Guidance so she would "know better" what she could do. She wished there had been more attention paid to the young children. (With Ray absent, and in this context, Nancy did "know some suggestions.")

In the course of the interview, Nancy said she wanted to leave Ray, but that she didn't think she could earn a living. (The complete lack of relationship was not only apparent in the interpersonal behavior in the interviews, but was overtly confirmed by Nancy.) When questioned about Ray's religion, Nancy said, "He only talks it, he doesn't do it. He hits me and our church says you should be mild, and I have to get him up or we wouldn't go to church.

He quotes the Bible about how I gotta obey him 'cause he's the husband, but he don't pay no attention to the part about him supposed to love me. He's not really Christian." (Nancy's report of Ray's manipulative self-serving use of religion fits with reports from those who knew Ray at Mountain-Plains and with the interviewer's observations.)

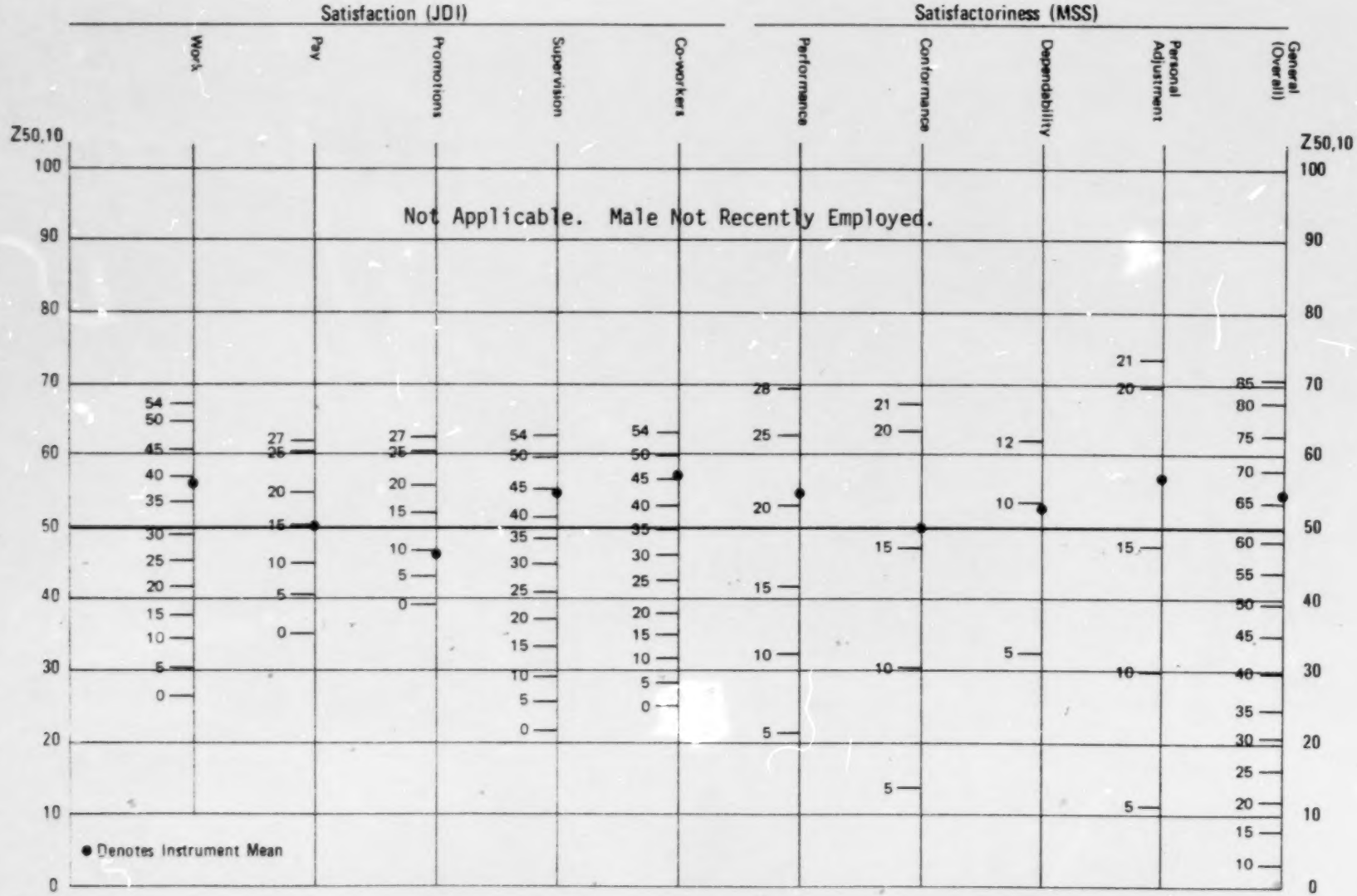
INTERVIEWER COMMENTS

The entire interview with the Bartons was most depressing. Their home is a hovel, Nancy and the children were pathetic in their fearfulness and vulnerability, and Ray portrayed the tensions of a man who was fighting hard to maintain his delusions. In the past, Ray's "religion defense" had been effective in sidetracking others and avoiding his responsibility for the course of events, but it now appeared it was becoming more and more difficult for Ray to blame "God's Will" and the perversity of man for his own misfortune.

If Ray could himself see his misuse of religion and begin to pursue religion and life honestly, he probably has the ability to provide for his family. If he does not take that responsibility his family would seem to be in for continued mixtures of indifference and outright abuse, and Ray for the continued self-deprecation and repression, that now characterize him. In brief, the Bartons seem to be in the same position as when they entered Mountain-Plains--a high level of marital conflict, poor parenting behaviors, on welfare, and living in a small trailer provided by relatives that appears to have been rescued from (but still surrounded by) a junk yard. It is difficult to see any positive impact that Mountain-Plains has had on the life style of this family.

Figure 1

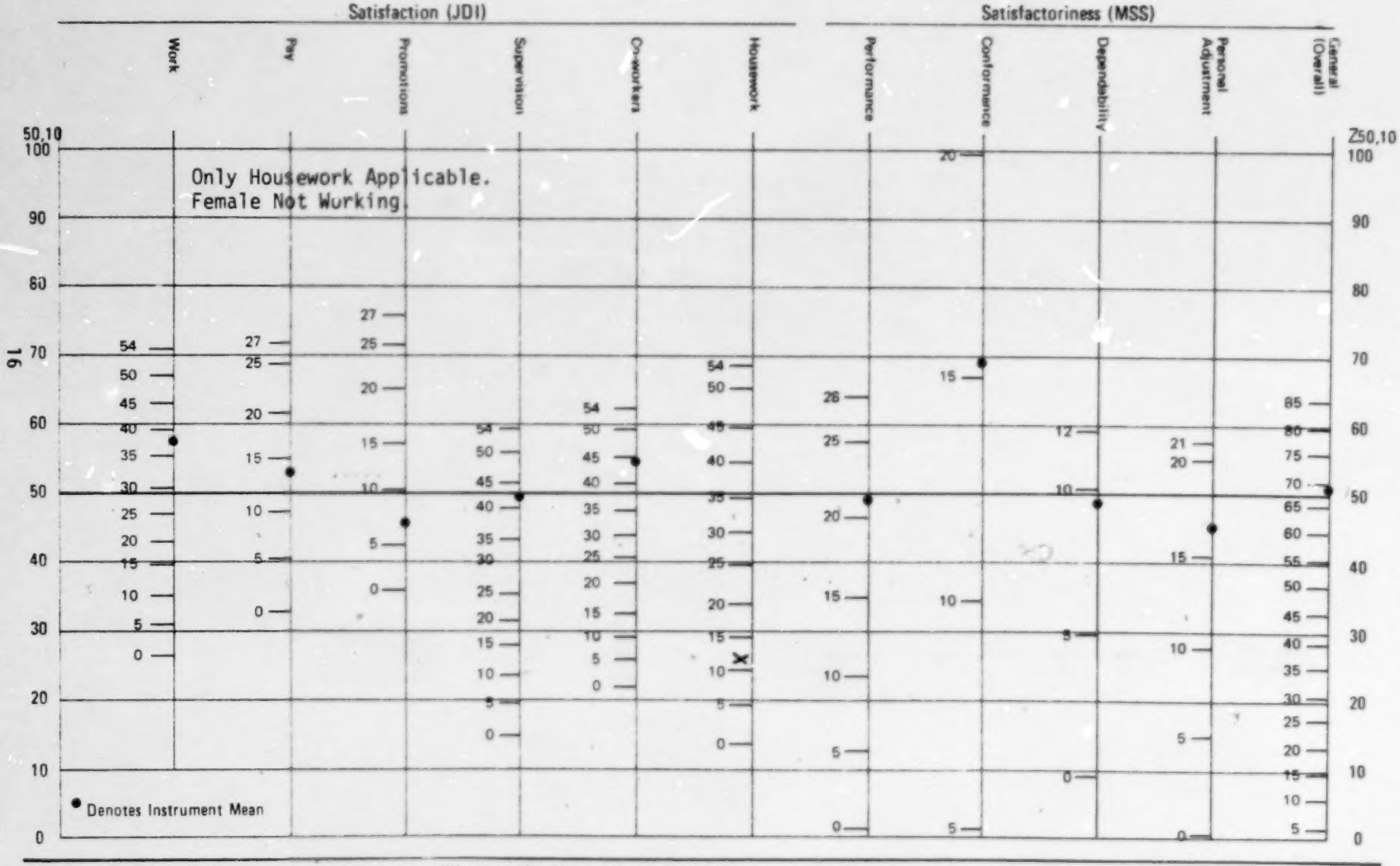
SATISFACTION AND SATISFACTORINESS – MALE



Note: Profile based on entering student scores.

Figure 2

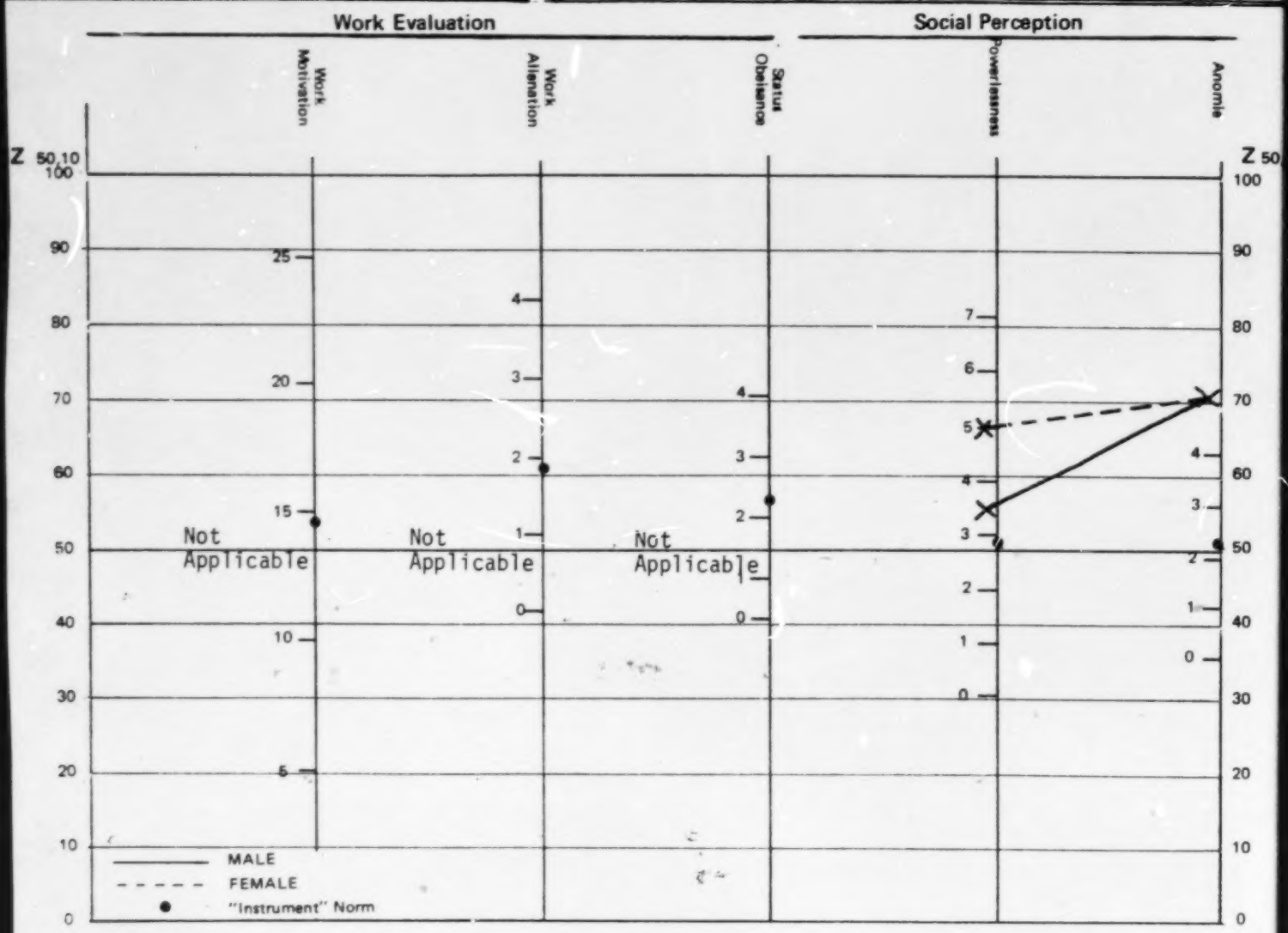
SATISFACTION AND SATISFACTORINESS – FEMALE



Note: Profile based on entering student norms except "Housework" which is based on instrument norm for employment.

Figure 3

MOTIVATION AND ALIENATION

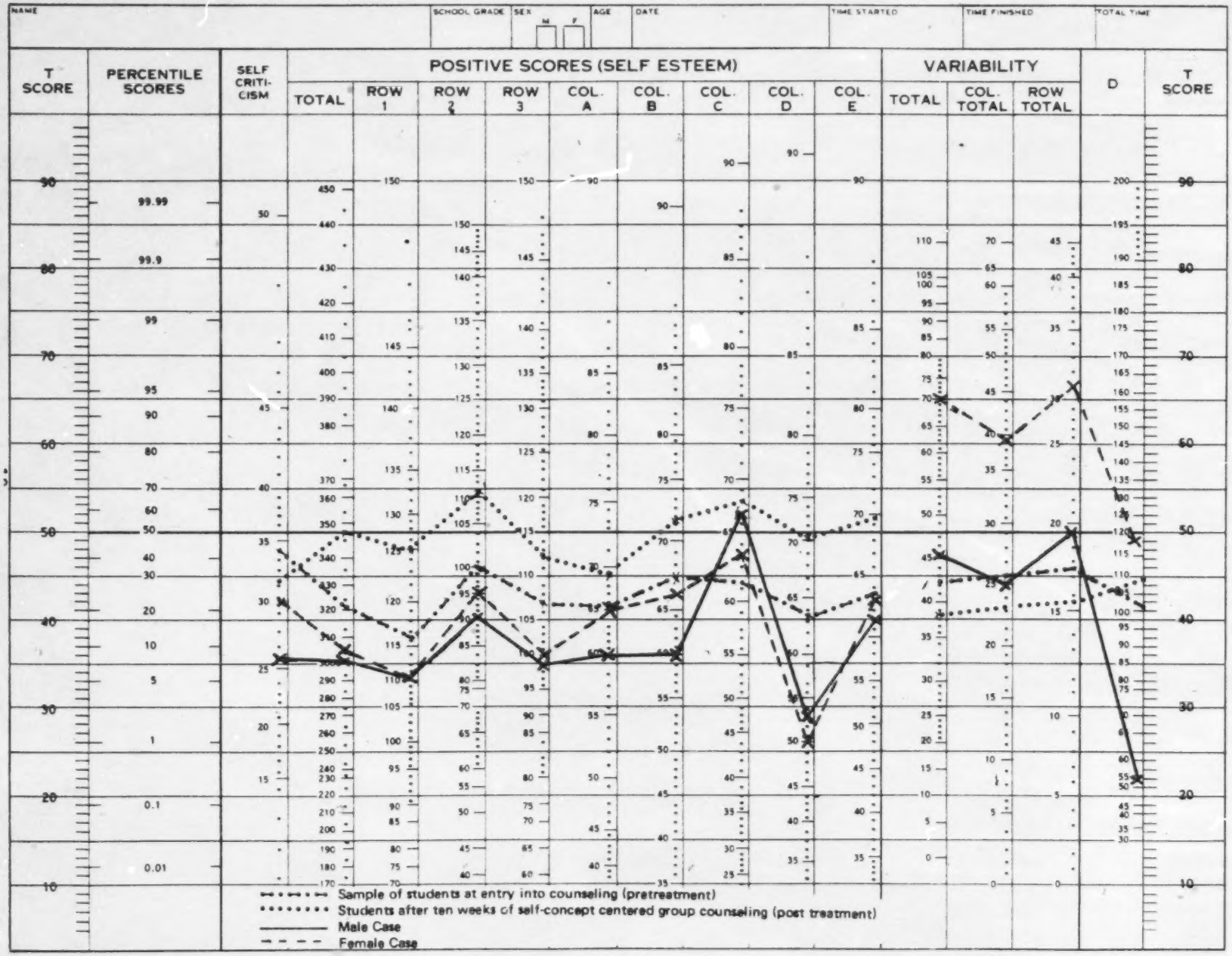


Note: Profile derived from entering student data.

Tennessee Self Concept Scale – Figure 4

PROFILE SHEET

Counseling Form



Note: This is the standard profile sheet for the TSCS.

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Male					Female			
High		Low			Low		High	
Much	Some	Little	None		None	Little	Some	Much
	●	- - - - - - - -		Job Training	NA			
●	- - - - - - - - - - - -			Math	-	●		
	●	- - - - - - - -		English	-	●		
	●	- - - - - - - -		Career Guidance			- - - - - - - -	●
●	- - - - - - - - - - - -			Work Experience	NA			
	●	- - - - - - - -		Counseling			- - - - - - - -	●
●	- - - - - - - - - - - -			Consumer Education	-	●		
			NA	Community Development	NA			
	●	- - - - - - - -		Recreation			- - - - - - - -	●
●	- - - - - - - - - - - -			Health			- - - - - - - -	●
			● -	Home Management			- - - - - - - -	●
			NA	Early Childhood	NA			

FIGURE 5

UTILITY RATING OF MOUNTAIN-PLAINS PROGRAM ELEMENTS

TABLE 1

SELF RATING OF PERSONAL AND WORK TRAIT CHANGES

Male		Female	
Improved	Regressed	Improved	Regressed
No Change	No Change	Appearance Punctuality Self-Knowledge Industriousness Dependability/ Reliability	Accuracy Perseverance

TABLE 2

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. "Rate Mountain-Plains as an influence in your life."

	Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative
Male		o			
Female					x

2. "Knowing what you know now, would you have chosen Mountain-Plains?"

	Definitely Yes	Probably Yes	Don't Know	Probably No	Definitely No
Male	o				
Female					x

3. "What is your rating for your current life in general?"

	Completely Satisfied	Well Satisfied	Neither Extreme	A Little Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Male			o		
Female				x	

4. "Rate your success:

		Completely Successful 9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Completely Unsuccessful 0
The year before M-P."	Male						o				
	Female					x					
Now."	Male						o				
	Female									x	
Five years from now."	Male	o									
	Female					x					